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cases could be found. Double plurals as *sus-tren* and *sisters*; *peases* and *peasen*, with many more of the same sort, to say nothing of those in *-en-e* are common enough; this is, however, not nearly the same thing as two endings in one and the same word. But there is, at least, one other double plural, which seems to be unique, namely, *children*. It is of such common occurrence that its history can be traced step by step from its earliest appearance, while the dialectic plural *childer* is still frequently heard. I have even met with the plural *childers*, which is no more illogical than its literary equivalent. On the whole it seems questionable whether it is correct to consider the final syllables in *kitt-en*, *maid-en* and *chick-en* as identical. There is much evidence in favor of regarding the *-en* in *maiden* as a feminine ending occurring in Greek as *-ivva* or *-iva*; in Latin as *-ina*; and in Gothic as *-ein*. The fact that the congeners of *chick* in many of the Germanic dialects append a diminutive syllable, gives color to the notion that the *-en* in English has the same force. On the other hand, there seems little doubt that it was not so regarded everywhere; for it is well known that it performs a variety of functions. It is not likely that the question can ever be definitely decided as to the real nature of this terminal syllable in *chicken*; but it seems safe to assume that it is not the same that occurs in *maiden*. Whatever may have been its ultimate origin it is not unreasonable to suppose that in the course of time the *-en* in *chicken* came to be regarded in some sections as a plural ending; in others a diminutive. So far as I have been able to observe, *chicken* is not at present generally used as a diminutive, *little chicken* being usually employed as the equivalent of *chick*. The most general use of *chicken* is as an equivalent of *hen*; and while *hen* and *chickens* is not infrequent it is not nearly so common as *old hen* and *little chickens*.

CHAS. W. SUPER.

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INTRODUCTORY FRENCH READER.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS:—Many teachers who are using some one of the Whitney* series of French Gram-

*'Introductory French Reader' by William Dwight Whitney and M. P. Whitney, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1891. 16mo, 256 pp.

mars will welcome the appearance of this reader, especially for the sake of the full grammatical references that apply alike to all three of the grammars in the series just mentioned. Beginning students are, on the whole, more apt to make better use of such helps than those who are advanced; and it certainly saves a teacher labor to have definite references to a well-known grammar, especially if it happens to be the grammar he is using. The obvious advantage that this 'Reader' possesses for use in connection with other text-books of the Whitney collection, might be a difficulty in the way of using it with grammars by other authors. The tri-partite arrangement and the character of the material selected for each part are not unlike other favorably known collections.

Notes that are easy to use, clear, not too voluminous, a table of irregular verbs, and references from each verb as given in the vocabulary to the table, an open, attractive page—these all are commendable things. The reference catalogue of the irregular verbs is especially noted in the preface, and the hope expressed that it may lessen one of the chief difficulties met by beginners. It will do this to a certain extent, but why will not some one go further, and give a simple lexicographic treatment of the irregular verbs in an elementary reader? Let *vais*, for example, be found near the top of the *v*-column with the definition, (I) 'go, from *aller*' not "see *aller*"; and when the student has turned to *aller* a further reference meets him: "see No. 66," in some grammar or in the back part of the book he is using. The irregular verb-forms are, after all, words much like other words; for the good of those who have to master them, it may be that they have been treated too much like beings from another world.

CHARLES HERBERT THURBER.

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A NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE FRENCH DRAMA.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—I notice that M. Petit de Julleville in his excellent book 'le Théâtre en France,' p. 305, repeats an error often made (see 'la France littéraire,' Grimm's 'Correspon-

dance,' in footnote) in stating that Saurin's "Beverley" is an imitation of Lillo's "George Barnwell." This is calculated to mislead students of the English and French drama alike. As a matter of fact Saurin's play is modelled on Edward Moore's "Gamester" and Saurin merely followed in the steps of Diderot. The latter had, in 1760, introduced "The Gamester" into France in "le Joueur," which remained in manuscript, but which Saurin undoubtedly knew (see the Garnier edition of Diderot, vol vii, pp. 413-415). Moore had also been translated in 1762 by Bruté de Loirelle. But Lillo's drama had considerable success in France, though not in the instance cited by M. Petit de Julleville. It was translated not far from 1750, (there appears to be an edition of 1748), Diderot had compared it favorably with "the Gamester" and Dorat had put its prison scene into French verse, changing *Barnwell* into *Barnevelt*. Accordingly we are not surprised to find that Mercier, influenced by the success of "Beverley" in 1768, should take up the other play recommended by Diderot, and adapt Lillo to French taste in his first published drama, "Jenneval ou le Barnevelt français" dated 1769 (the dates given for Mercier's works in footnote of p. 323 of 'le Théâtre en France' apply, it will be noticed, to their first performances in Paris). The views of Mercier, who passes for a stern realist, regarding the necessity of toning down his English original to suit the refinement of France, are decidedly amusing (see Preface to the Amsterdam edition (1776) of his works). If not presuming, I would from these and other facts, place the date of French interest in the English stage at least a decade earlier than does M. Petit de Julleville (op. cit. p. 305), and point out that it was evidently Diderot who particularly fostered it among the play wrights, so far as the *drame* was concerned. Shakespeare appears to have appealed to a class entirely different from Diderot and his school.

F. M. WARREN.

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THE PHONETIC SECTION

OF THE

Modern Language Association of America.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—Although I have already sent invita-

tions to various persons who have shown an interest in phonetics, I should like to publish in the NOTES a general announcement to the effect that any person who is so inclined may become a member of the Section, for 1892, on payment of one dollar to the Secretary. More money is needed to cover the expenses of this year's work, which will consist, in part, of an investigation of the *ɔ-o* and the *a-æ* series ('loss,' 'cost,' etc. and 'pass,' 'ask,' etc.)

I take this opportunity to add 'whom' to my list of *û-u* words, printed in MOD. LANG. NOTES, vi, 8, pp. 464-6. The pronunciation *hum* (*u* as in 'pull'), due, no doubt, to the analogy of 'broom' and 'room,' I have heard recently from several Boston school-teachers; it occurs even when the word is strongly accented; as in, "Don't say *who*, say *whom*" (*dount sei hû, sei hum*). I should be glad to know whether it has been noted elsewhere. 'Whom,' of course, does not belong to the vulgar dialect at all, and therefore affords an interesting example of the influence of popular on learned words.

C. H. GRANDGENT,

Secretary.

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THE PLAY OF THE WEAVERS OF COVENTRY.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—Permit me to call attention to a fact, not hitherto noticed I think. The Weaver's play is, "The Presentation in the Temple and the Disputation with the Doctors." The "Presentation" serves as an introduction, the "Disputation" is the heart of the play. The "Disputation" of the Weaver's play is the second scene of the York play of "Christ with the Doctors in the Temple," with a new introduction and a different close.

From the point where Jesus enters and salutes the Doctors, the plays are the same until, in York, Joseph addresses Jesus, and, in Coventry, the Doctor addresses Mary,—sixteen stanzas of the York play. The York play is evidently the older. The Coventry gild, probably, adopted the play with very few alterations, but Robert Croo, in the sixteenth century, changed the wording and occasionally a sentence to suit his own ideas of polished diction. To this he testifies with all the pride